

A Co-Active Signal System for Deafblind Children, Hope Inc.

Co-active signing is the physical guidance of the child's hand(s) to facilitate production of a standard manual sign for expressive communication. The communication partner and child should be positioned so that they are both comfortable and able to produce signs. Because the communication partner position may vary in relationship to the child (i.e. beside the child, in front of the child, or behind the child), he or she should remember to facilitate sign production from the child's perspective. Care should be taken to consider the child's dominant hand in the production of the sign, as otherwise this can lead to confusion on how the sign is produced. In co-active signing, care should be taken to ensure the direction and movements are produced accurately so they are not confusing for the child when they are produced from the communication partner's perspective and not the child's. Communication partners should differentiate between communication input to the child and output of the child and use coactive signs only to facilitate the child's expressive communication (output). The child will become confused if coactive sign is used for both receptive and expressive communication. Not all manual signs can be produced accurately in a non-visual manner coactively, such as the sign for wait. Adaptations will likely need to be made.

When is your child ready for Co-active sign?

1. She/he understands and uses a few signals and cues.
2. She/he relates to objects in a meaningful way.

Begin by using one sign (or perhaps two) at a time. Avoid signs that are similar.

Two basic ways to teach using co-active sign:

- A. Selecting those signs for the signal and cue that the child already understands.
This will be easier for the child to learn.
 1. (Pair) Use the corresponding co-active sign after the child uses his signal and/or cue.
 2. Use the co-active sign frequently during the activity.
 3. Respond to child's sign by giving them what they want.
- B. Introduce new signs, selecting those signs that are used frequently throughout the day (i.e. more, finish, sit, and come). Signs that feel like the motion used in the activity (i.e. ball, bowl, throw, hug, and eat/food) or relate to objects will be easier to learn.

Follow these procedures:

1. Make sign in a meaningful way and use frequently
2. Pause to see if the child will respond
3. If no response, help child make the sign co-actively
4. Respond to child's sign

Positioning:

There is no one way for best positioning when using co-active sign. Use whatever is the most comfortable. There are three possibilities:

- Behind the child-especially important for older children. It is easy to make two handed behind the child-use this for very small young children. You can easily make the sign without reversing it.
- Side by side-use this if you are already in this position. Again there are typically no problems with sign reversal.
- Front positioning allows for the most natural way of communication (face to face). This is a good position for older children. Be careful of sign reversals.

Co-Active Signal System

List of suggested early words for use with co-active sign (m=modified).

Introduction tape:

(2 minutes)

Signs for Family interaction (1)	
By	
Hi	
Mom	
Dad	
Child's name/name sign/cue	
Other's name sign	Can use manual alphabet or physical attribute
	Tip: Start with an identifier such as a ring/long hair, etc., and begin to pair it with the name sign
Me/I	Point to child's chest
You	Point to yourself/other person
Mine/me	
You/Yours	
	Tip: Can use object to help learn this, such as holding onto your object and having child feel you move it toward your chest and sign mine or having child hold onto an object and having her move it toward their chest while you co-actively assist them in signing mine/me.
	Tip for pronouns: Since these are difficult for Deaf-Blind children, it is recommended that you start with first name signs. Later can pair name with pronoun (Rachel's shoe/my shoe-bring it to her chest)
No	
	Tip: Good way to teach this is to use the "no" sign when they push away an item or indicate they do not want something such as a food item they dislike. Can use it to discourage a behavior, but should pair it with a touch cue such as lightly holding down the leg for no kicking.
Yes	
	Tip: Use this sign when they like something you gave them.
Please	
Thank you	
Foods: (2)	
Apple	Tip: Pair sign with a real apple, feel it and taste it.
Banana	Tip: Pair sign with a real banana, peel it and taste it.
Bread	
Candy	
Cereal	Tip: Help the child scoop cereal and take a bite, then make

	co-active sign.
Cookie	Tip: Put a cookie in child's left hand and help them make cookie sign on it with their right hand. Then produce the co-active sign.
Cracker	
Drink	
Egg	Tip: Help child feel an egg and crack it, then make co-active sign. Expose child to different types of eggs, such as boiled, fried, and scrambled.
Food	
Juice	Tip: Use orange juice in a squeeze bottle, and help them squeeze it and take a drink, then produce co-active sign.
Meat	Tip: Help child hold a sliced piece of meat and then produce co-active sign. Expose child to different types of cold meat.
Milk	
Potato	Tip: Help the child hold a potato in their left hand and make sign with their right hand, then produce co-active sign.
Soup	Tip: Help the child take a bite of soup with a spoon, then produce co-active sign. Make sure you make the motion several times as otherwise you will be singing spoon (same motion but made once).
Daily Routines-Eating: (3)	
Bottle	Tip: Put bottle in left hand and help child feel the bottle from bottom to top, then perform co-active sign.
Bowl	Tip: Help the child feel the bowl bottom and side, and produce co-active sign.
Chair	
Cup	
Glass	Tip: Help child feel the glass from bottom to top, then produce sign co-actively.
Drink	
Eat	
Finish	Important sign! Use at end of each activity.
Fork	Tip: Help your child hold fork in right hand and tap left palm, then produce co-active sign.
More	Important sign to use! Pair it with what they want.
Plate	Tip: Help your child feel the plate
Spoon	Make movement only once so as not to confuse with soup.
Table	Tip: Help child tap table with left arm, and then produce sign coactively.

Want	Important sign! Use this sign when they indicate they want something.
Want More	Pair sign for want more with an item.
How to decide which co-active signs to use first?	<p>Select signs based on your child's experiences/needs. Select signs likely to elicit a response from the child (i.e. food, bye bye). Begin use of 1 or 2 co-active signs. Avoid signs that are too similar (i.e. juice/milk) Chose signs easy for the child to relate to an object or an activity or an iconic sign (motion looks like the activity).</p>
Daily Routines-Dressing Undressing/Toileting/Diapering (4)	
Clothes	
Dress	
Pajamas	
Pants	Tip: Help child feel waist band and then produce sign.
Shirt	Note: Wrong sign
Shoes	
Socks	
Put on	Note: Wrong sign-just make sign for on-pair with item/sign
Take off	Note: Wrong sign-just make sign for off-pair with item/sign
Clean	
Dirty	
Diaper	Tip: Help child feel sides of diaper/pins/tape, and then produce sign.
Toilet	Tip: Initially, tap near kidney area.
Key Points:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alert child to your presence and who you are. 2. Let child know what you are about to do. 3. Present 1-2 co-active signs, paired with the object 4. Use co-active sign for signals/cues child uses/knows 5. Help child know when he has completed the activity-finished sign.
Daily Routines-washing/bathing (5)	
Bath	
Arm –modified sign	Outline arm with index finger
Face –	
Foot-modified sign	Tap foot with index finger
Hand-modified sign	Outline hand with finger
Leg-modified sign	Run index finger up your leg
Cold	Tip: Let you child stand in front of a refrigerator with the

	door open and make sign cold
Dry	
Hot	Tip: Blow on child's hand or let them feel steam from a cup, and produce sign.
Soap	Tip: put soap in child's left palm and help child make sign with right hand, remove soap and produce sign coactively
Towel- modified sign	Tip: use palms of both hands and rub face in a circular motion with a towel, then repeat sign co-actively
Tub –modified sign	Cup hands and outline shape of tub
Sink-modified sign	Cup hands and outline shape of sink
Wash cloth-modified	Similar for towel but hands go straight up and down on face
Wash	Tip: Put soap in right hand and rub against it with the knuckles of your right hand, repeat with co-active sign
Water	
Wet	Tip: pair sign with something wet or moisten child's chin and produce co-active sign.
Note: When making co-active sign, remember key points about form and speed	Hold child's hands in a firm/gently manner Form signs precisely and clear Size should be normal size Speed should be slow as child needs time to process Provide wait time
Daily Routines- brushing teeth/getting up/going to bed (6)	
Brush	Tip: Pair with a brush
Comb	Tip: Pair with a comb
Hair	
Teeth	
Toothbrush	
Toothpaste	
Bed	Tip: Pair with bed
Time	Tip: Pair with activity and time such as bed time
Book	Tip: Help child open book and produce sign co-actively
Blanket	Tip: Position blanket so it is under left arm and use right arm to move it up, and then produce sign coactively.
In	Tip: use object and help put it in
Out	Tip: use object and help take it out
Light	Can use sign for light and pair with light or used modified sign of bending the child's index finger in such as shutting off a light switch (pair with light switch on and off)
Sleep	

Up	
Down	
Wake Up	
Note: Teaching nouns/verbs	Use 1 motion for a noun Use repeated motions for verbs
Daily Routines-Play and sensory stimulation (7)	
Bell	
Light	
Listen	
Look	
Mobile	
Music	
Play	
What	
Ball	
Blocks	
Doll	
Bean	
Cat	
Dog	
Rabbit	
Feelings- Being sick (8)	
Bad	
Feel	
Funny	
Good	
Happy	
Hurt	
Love	
Mad	
Medicine	
Sad	
Sick	
Sorry	
Tired	
Actions Words in ADL's (9)	
Bathe	
Brush	

Comb	
Come	
Dress	
Drink	
Drop	
Dry	
Eat	
Feel	
Finish	
Go	
Help	
Hold	
Lie	
More Action Words and prepositions (10)	
Listen	
Look	
Play	
Put	
Sleep	
Sit	
Stand	
Stop	
Wait	
Want	
Wash	
Going Places and Visiting People: (11)	
Car	
Door	
Go	
Stop	
Open	
Close	
Wagon	
Doctor	
Grandma	
Grandpa	
Home	
Outside	

Inside	
School	
Store	
Special Words for Sensory Impaired Children: (12)	
Brace	
Corner seat	
Glasses	
Hearing Aide	
Hospital	
Shot	
Therapy	
Therapy Ball	
Tube	
Wedge	
Wheelchair	
Other Topics:	See DVD for details.....
Toys and Animals	
Body Parts	
Colors	
Letters and Numbers	
Home	
Food	
Being sick and hurt	
Time	
Prepositions	
Clothing	